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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 009095

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/25/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [CO](#) [FARC](#)

SUBJECT: COLOMBIANS PROTEST FRENCH REGARDING FARC
NEGOTIATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood; reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

1. (U) The Colombian Foreign Ministry sent the French Ambassador to Colombia a diplomatic note on September 23 protesting France's latest contact with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in early September, without GOC authorization. The French reportedly sent the envoy to negotiate the release of dual Colombian-French national Ingrid Betancourt. An earlier contact with a FARC representative last July was made with GOC knowledge. Colombia's note objected to the most recent encounter which "meddles in the internal affairs of our nation." The note goes on to request that France respect the principles governing the Franco-Colombian bilateral relationship. It specifically urges the French government to consult the Colombian government before contacting the FARC directly. All major Colombian television news broadcasts gave the protest note prominent coverage.

2. (U) The previous French Ambassador to Colombia is now married to Ingrid's sister Astrid Betancourt and has been a visible French representative on the subject, in Bogota and now in Paris. Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin is also known to be close to the Betancourt family. Since the Ambassador departed Bogota, President Chirac has sent at least two envoys to meet with FARC representatives.

3. (U) Begin informal translation of dipnote:

Mr. Ambassador:

I use this opportunity to address your Excellency to communicate that the Government of Colombia has recently received information about the contacts that the Government of France is advancing with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), with the goal of freeing Ms. Ingrid Betancourt.

Colombia wishes to protest the fact that these negotiations went forward without being announced to the national government, thereby meddling in the internal affairs of our nation.

Colombia hopes that France will respect the principles that have guided relations between the two nations and will consult the Colombian government before proceeding with any overture of this nature. Colombia repeats before the French Government and before public opinion that it has not authorized any contact between FARC representatives and that government.

I take this opportunity to reiterate to your Excellency assurances of my highest and distinguished consideration.

/s/

Camilo Reyes Rodriguez,
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Charge d'Affaires,
Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

4. (C) Comment: The European Union decision to designate the FARC as a terrorist organization was an important step. In view of IRA training of the FARC, a Danish NGO's assertions of a "right" to provide financial support to the FARC, and unilateral French overtures to the FARC, it is important to reinforce European solidarity against the FARC.
WOOD